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Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (U) This week's product is a joint effort of Embassy New Delhi and Consulate General Mumbai in conveying items of interest for September 15-26, 2007 that did not feature in our other reporting, including:

- India to Launch Israeli Spy Satellite?
- BJP President Urges UN Resolution 1373 Sanctions on Pakistan and Bangladesh
- Siachen Glacier Trek - Off Again, On Again
- Ayni Air Base Rumors Won't Die
- Mayawati Attempts to Go National
- Indra 2007) Indian Troops Train in Russia for the First Time
- Muslim Mob Attacks Police in South Delhi
- Dynasty Politics Are Alive and Well in India

India to Launch Israeli Spy Satellite?

[1](#)2. (SBU) Indian wire media and the Jerusalem Post reported September 20 that the India Space Research Organization (ISRO) will launch an Israeli spy satellite into polar orbit "within days." Israel reportedly asked India because Israel cannot launch an object into polar orbit, and because ISRO charges far less than Western space powers. The Jerusalem Post alleges that the satellite is a TecSar, the most advanced Israeli type, and will be used to monitor suspected Iranian nuclear facilities. According to the Post, the TecSar incorporates synthetic aperture radar (SAR) technology developed by the Israeli firm Elta, which can create high-resolution images from advanced radar technology. Neither ISRO nor the Israeli government would confirm the type of radar or the launch date to the media.

BJP President Urges UN Resolution 1373 Sanctions on Pakistan and Bangladesh

[1](#)3. (U) "The Hindu" reported that Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP) president Rajnath Singh urged the United Progressive Alliance government to pressure the United Nations Security Council to warn Bangladesh and Pakistan that they risk economic sanctions under UN Resolution 1373 if they fail to clamp down on terrorist training centers and infrastructure. In a show of political gamesmanship at the BJP national executive meeting in Bhopal, Singh charged the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance September 19 with being lax on terror and called on the government to increase diplomatic efforts to enforce the UN resolution against its two neighbors for not cooperating in the war on terror. He also accused the government of having neither a coherent policy nor the political gumption to deal with terrorism in India.

Siachen Glacier Trek - Off Again, On Again

14. (SBU) In an odd turn of events, the Siachen civilian trekking expedition (ref b) was cancelled then reinstated over a period of three days. Originally touted by the Indian press as the first ever civilian trek to the Siachen glacier, which is officially claimed by both Pakistan and India, the GOI called it off September 17 following Pakistan's formal protest to the trek (ref a). Officially, the trek was halted due to a lack of Ministry of Defence clearances, but it more likely had to do with Pakistan's objections, which were outlined in this statement from the Pakistani Foreign office: "Siachen remains a conflict zone and the reported move by India to open this to tourism could aggravate the situation with serious consequences that vitiate the atmosphere for the ongoing peace process." However, the MOD subsequently

NEW DELHI 00004414 002 OF 004

announced September 18 that the trek would set off according to schedule after all. On September 25, a revised team of 42 participants, including cadets from the Indian Military Academy, Military School and Rashtriya Indian Military College commenced the 22-day expedition, according to "The Indian Express."

15. (SBU) Curiously, the media reported September 19 that, in fact, civilian treks on the disputed glacier had been going on for years. The Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF) had reportedly organized several joint expeditions with Japanese, French and British trekkers. "Teams of various nationalities have been touring the glacier for over a decade," the IMF's spokesperson reportedly said. "The Indian Express" quoted Defence Minister A.K. Antony as stating that "the Siachen area has been open for quite some time," and that three civilian teams from the U.S., France and Australia had undertaken expeditions in the region since July 2007.

16. (SBU) Kashmiri terrorist organization Hizbul Mujahideen made its objections known September 21, reportedly claiming, "The opening of Siachen to tourists is India's ploy to claim its right on the disputed territory."

Ayni Air Base Rumors Won't Die

17. (SBU) The Indian press continued to allude to Indian plans to build a military base in Tajikistan, by reporting September 20 that India is going to be "evicted from its sole overseas (sic) military facility at Ayni air base." (Note: India refurbished the runway at Ayni earlier this year to the tune of USD 1.77 million. End note.) Media quoted "senior military officials" as stating that Russia had leveraged its influence with Tajikistan to "terminate New Delhi's loose arrangement regarding Ayni" as a warning to New Delhi not to get too close to the U.S. The MOD is reportedly awaiting direction from the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to begin operating out of the Tajik air base, according to "The Asian Age" and "The Tribune."

18. (C) Comment: The Ministry of External Affairs denied

that the GOI is operating an air base in Tajikistan, as does the Tajik government. The source of these rumors, the oft-quoted "senior military officials," remain a mystery. End comment.

Mayawati Attempting to Go National

¶9. (U) Keen to spread her wings, Uttar Pradesh (UP) Chief Minister and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) President Mayawati initiated her plan to expand her party beyond UP. At a public meeting in Vadodara, Gujarat on September 17, Mayawati welcomed defecting members of the BJP, including former state Secretary General Nalin Bhatt, to the BSP. Mayawati also announced that her party will be contesting all 182 seats in the November 2007 Gujarat state assembly elections.

¶10. (U) Mayawati attempted to recreate her electoral strategy of appealing to upper and lower caste Hindus and Muslims, which won the BSP a majority in the UP state assembly, by assuring upper caste voters that the BSP was not against them. Insisting that the BSP believed in a classless society, Mayawati promised to push for reservations in both public and private sectors for not only the lower caste and tribal population but also the poor and unemployed upper caste.

¶11. (U) Comment: Gujarat BJP dissidents are looking at various party allegiances to contest the state elections. Some have made overtures to the BSP and others have joined the Nationalist Congress Party, which has formed an alliance to contest elections. The BSP strategy has always been to contest independently and not get into pre-poll alliances. While Mayawati's efforts began with a bang in Gujarat on

NEW DELHI 00004414 003 OF 004

September 17, more recent press reports indicate that defections have come to a standstill, with BJP members saying they don't want to commit political suicide by joining an unrecognized force, namely the BSP, in Gujarat. While Mayawati does not expect to win a majority in the Gujarat state assembly election, her strategy is to start picking up a few seats in each state to build BSP power at a national level. Realizing her aspiration to be kingmaker will rest on her party's ability to make or break a coalition government at the center, she is astutely playing a game of numbers. End Comment.

Indra 2007) Indian Troops Train in Russia for the First Time

¶12. (SBU) The air-and-land element of the 2007 Indo-Russian war games, "Indra" was completed September 20 at a Russian airborne training center in Pskov, just a few dozen miles from the Estonian border. Indian army chief of staff J.J. Singh arrived in Pskov to watch the final days of the joint-exercise, and pitched an "enhanced level of military to military cooperation with Russia." The Pskov exercise focused on anti-terrorism training using elite airborne paratroopers.

Though Russia has sent soldiers many times to India for training (during the Indra 2005 exercises, for example) this was the first time Indian troops have ever trained on Russian soil.

¶13. (SBU) Singh spent the few days prior to the event in Moscow meeting top Russian brass, and told media September 19 that he discussed with his counterparts how to encourage more military officer exchanges between the two countries, even suggesting "cost subsidized holidays for officers and their families in each other's country." As Singh waxed nostalgic for the good old days of Russian bear-hugs, Indian media continued to expose even more examples of Russian bad faith in its multi-billion dollar military sales to India; on top of the Gorshkov (aircraft carrier) delay and cost overruns and price-gouging on the SU-30 fighter deal, it was revealed by Indian media September 10 that Russian-made and

refurbished IL-38 maritime reconnaissance planes delivered to India failed to meet quality control checks. Comment: To be sure, there will be substance to Defence Minister Antony's upcoming visit to Moscow in October, as he is expected to discuss Russian help in developing nuclear submarines and joint development of a fifth generation fighter plane. However, one defense analyst contact described the visit merely as "relationship maintenance." Surely the Indians will take a swipe at the reliability of Russian supplies in an effort to extract savings on pending contracts, and Russia will play the nostalgia card in hopes of influencing the MRCA deal and future contracts. In the end, both sides will declare that the long-standing friendship remains intact. Meanwhile, trend lines clearly show the growth area for India's defense cooperation is in the U.S.-India relationship, with Russia the big loser. End comment.

Muslim Mob Attacks Police in South Delhi

¶14. (SBU) On September 22, violence erupted in South Delhi after a police officer allegedly kicked over a cart carrying religious Islamic literature, including copies of the Quran. An altercation ensued between police officers and the local Muslim population, which escalated after a large crowd left a mosque after Ramadan evening prayers. The crowd protesting the police action turned violent and set two police posts on fire near Jamia Millia Islamia University. Reportedly, police fired into the air and hurled teargas shells to disperse the agitated mob. More than three dozen people, including several police officers, were injured and over a dozen arrested. The government responded quickly by deploying five companies (50-60 officers) of security personnel to the area. A police official noted that the situation in the Jamia area is now peaceful.

NEW DELHI 00004414 004 OF 004

¶15. (C) Comment: The violence erupted in an area bordering Uttar Pradesh (UP), a state with a large (18 percent) Muslim population. Though the media did not sensationalize the incident, and the police quickly restored peace in the area, this could be seen as a political opportunity by Samajwadi Party President Mulayam Singh Yadav. While current UP Chief Minister Mayawati is claiming to have re-established law and order in UP, Mulayam could capitalize on this incident, stoking communal tensions and creating a serious law and order situation. End Comment.

Dynasty Politics Are Alive and Well in India

¶16. (SBU) The BJP's Uttar Pradesh unit announced on September 25 the appointment of Pankaj Singh, the 30-year old son of BJP President Rajnath Singh, as the head of the youth wing of the party in the state. This announcement comes a day after BJP leader Venkaiah Naidu derided the appointment of Rahul Gandhi to a senior position in the Congress Party. Naidu had said that the Gandhi appointment came as no surprise for the BJP, as the Congress Party "is known for its dynastic politics. It is their dynasty." The UP unit of the BJP sought to deflect criticism of Pankaj Singh's appointment by saying that the BJP President had no role in what was a collective decision by state-level BJP leaders. As Pankaj Singh has no prior political experience, people will find this explanation hard to accept.

¶17. (SBU) Comment: Dynasty politics are a well-established practice in India, with family members routinely following their relatives into senior party and government positions. The Nehru/Gandhi dynasty is, of course, the most famous of these lineages, but there are innumerable other cases across the Indian political landscape of children or spouses following their prominent parents or spouses into politics. In fact, it may be argued that it is the rule, rather than the exception, to see at least one child following in the

footsteps of a politically successful parent. The only two Indian political organizations that have resisted this practice have been the BJP and the Communists. The BJP, in particular, as the opposition party for much of its existence in this and previous incarnations, has used the issue as a campaign plank with some success. In almost every national election it has mocked and ridiculed the domination by the Nehru/Gandhi family of the Congress Party. The BJP,s appointment of Rajnath Singh,s son to a senior party position will weaken the BJP,s credibility on this issue. It will also open up Rajnath Singh to attack from his detractors within the BJP who find him ineffective as party leader. End comment.

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